



AIC Newsletter – April 2021

Message from our International President, Rose de Lima Ramanankavana



A year has already passed since the current Board took office. I would like to take this opportunity to give thanks to God. If the year 2020 surprised us all with this unprecedented crisis that suddenly confronted us with fear, suffering and uncertainty, today, even if our hearts are still full of anxiety, we can see that the Lord, Saint Vincent and Saint Louise have always been by our side and have enabled us to carry out some wonderful actions. And I am sure that we will be able to do even more!

We have recently had the joy of celebrating Easter. With the resurrected Christ, let us choose the side of Life that is stronger than death, for it is Life that comes to colour our wounds and our moments of suffering with hope. May our devotion to Christ and our faith in the power of the resurrection enable us to persevere through fears, constraints and difficulties with tenacious patience, hope stronger than any desolation and redoubled attention for all those who are waiting for love and support.

Christ by his resurrection makes us all live with him with a new life, he who is the light of the world. May this light of the resurrection shine within ourselves and may we be bearers of it for all those who cross our path, and especially for our brothers and sisters who live in poverty.

Madagascar: A wonderful initiative for International Women's Day

This year the AIC volunteers from Fianarantsoa, Madagascar, celebrated 8th March, International Women's Day, in a practical and innovative way.

They decided to participate in the reforestation of the country by planting fruit trees (papaya, coffee, lemon, orange, moringa, etc.) in the garden of the "Second Chance School" where their project takes place.

In partnership with another organisation, the "Second Chance School" offers a fresh start to 20 young people of secondary school age, who come from very disadvantaged families and have dropped out of school. The school provides a catch up course and then guidance towards vocational training and support until the students obtain a diploma. Specialised tutors and AIC volunteers are part of the teaching staff.





On International Women’s Day, the volunteers provided seedlings, fertiliser and refreshments, and the young beneficiaries of the project and their parents participated in the planting.

Going forward, the young people will be responsible for watering and maintaining the plants so that they develop properly. A well-tended orange tree can yield 100kg of fruit.

As soon as the first crops are harvested, the fruit will be eaten in the school canteen that is open to the young beneficiaries every lunchtime. Any surplus will be sold to generate income for the project.

A fantastic initiative that addresses several of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and could easily be replicated elsewhere in the world!

The AIC representatives participate in the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN (CSW65)



The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women’s rights, documenting the reality of women’s lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. CSW65 took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 15th-26th March 2021.

The CSW65 priority theme was: *“Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”*.

The AIC representatives make the voices of the women we work with heard at this important international Commission. AIC, along with four NGOs from the Vincentian Family (Sisters of Charity Federation, the Company of the Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission and the International Society of St. Vincent de Paul), submitted a written statement to the Commission urging member states to step up their actions towards addressing the increased violence against women and girls due to the pandemic.

AIC also collaborated with the Vincentian Family and other organisations to co-sponsor two side-events as part of the Commission. The first, *“Transforming gender stereotypes: Making the uncomfortable conversation comfortable”*, discussed ways of changing gender stereotypes and norms to bring about transformative change. The second, *“Hidden Homelessness: From Trauma to Empowerment”*, offered information on women living in insecure housing and shared solutions and outcomes.

Nigeria: Training in cultivating cassava that’s fortified with Vitamin A

In March 2020, despite the pandemic, AIC-Nigeria successfully launched its project *“Empowering women in Nduhobokwe to improve cassava yields and integrate vitamin A into their diets”*, which was awarded the Dominique Prize for Sustainable Development 2020.

The volunteers adapted to the pandemic by first raising awareness among women beneficiaries of the project about barrier gestures, before beginning the actual training on cassava cultivation. At the end of the sessions, the group of women received fortified yellow cassava seeds, rich in Vitamin A, and fertilisers, and began sowing with great enthusiasm. They hope to harvest a large quantity of cassava in 2021 and thus improve their quality of life.



Colombia: The unforgettable experience of a Venezuelan volunteer

Because of the pandemic and the closure of the borders, Selina, a member of AIC-Venezuela, who arrived in Colombia shortly before the cancellation of the AIC International Assembly, ended up living for nine months in the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Bogota where the Assembly should have been held. She was warmly welcomed by the sisters and had an unforgettable experience of community life.

“I arrived in Bogotá for a few days [...] and shared months of work, prayer, reflection and encounter with the purity and truth of our Charism [...]. During these nine months, I experienced something that I could never have imagined. Not only because I was so far from my family [...], but also because I shared the daily life of the Daughters of Charity: the same house, the same meals, the same joys and sorrows. And above all, I was able to share a small part of their spiritual life.”



Selina also actively participated in the food distribution project for homeless people, another striking experience: *“Being part of this experience for months, always having something to give, is the most beautiful manifestation of a firm faith in Divine Providence. I have been a volunteer for many years, but after what I have experienced here, I can now say in prayer to Saint Vincent: “This is your Lady of Charity””*.

AIC is most grateful to Sr. Cecilia Triana González, Provincial Visitatrix, Father Alvaro Mauricio Fernández, Provincial Director, and the entire community of the Daughters of Charity of Bogota for the support they gave to Selina throughout her stay.



Ukraine: A support project that's being replicated

AIC volunteers in Brody, Ukraine, have set up a project to improve the living conditions of 22 vulnerable elderly people who usually live alone and are particularly affected by the pandemic. As a first step, in order to identify and respond to their needs, mobile teams were trained in visiting elderly people and various local partnerships were developed.

The volunteers distribute food parcels and health and hygiene products. They also provide psychological support by phone and, if possible, in person, to help the elderly people cope with isolation. In addition to meeting basic needs, this project improves access to information on the

prevention and detection of COVID-19. It also aims to inform older people of their rights and the recourses available in times of pandemic, giving them the opportunity to improve their situation.

Other local AIC groups in Ukraine have been inspired by this project to set up similar activities in their parishes.

Lebanon: Thank you message from the President

Nawal Sfeir, President of AIC-Lebanon and Zeina Kreidy, Secretary, send their thanks to the whole AIC network for its support following the devastating explosion in Beirut last August.

Dear colleagues at AIC International,

It is with great emotion and gratitude that we send you this short note to assure you that we will never forget your generous support for our association AIC-Lebanon after the explosion in the port of Beirut and the disastrous financial, economic and health situation of the Lebanese people.

55% of the population are now living in poverty. We try to continue to move forward thanks to our social centre and the medical-social centre (dispensary) in Karm El Zeitoun, Beirut.

In renewing our heartfelt thanks to you, we pray that you and your families will be under the continued protection of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary.



“Amid the many hardships we are enduring, let us never forget that we have been healed by the wounds of Christ (cf. 1 Pet 2:24). In the light of the Risen Lord, our sufferings are now transfigured. Where there was death, now there is life. Where there was mourning, now there is consolation. In embracing the cross, Jesus bestowed meaning on our sufferings and now we pray that the benefits of that healing will spread throughout the world.”
Pope Francis, Urbi et orbi Message, Easter 2021
